DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 093 SP 030 483

AUTHOR Shibles, Mark R.
TITLE School Leadership Preparation: A Preface for Action.
INSTITUTION American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 24p.
AVAILABLE FROM AACTE Publications, One Dupont Circle, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036-2412 ($5.00).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; *Administrator Qualifications; Administrator Responsibility; Educational Change; Higher Education; *Leadership Training; Professional Development; *Program Content; Program Development; *State Standards; Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Recruitment

ABSTRACT

School administrators risk becoming an anachronism if their preparation programs in schools, colleges, and departments of education do not respond to calls for change in preparing them for professional leadership functions. Provided in this report is a discussion of the status of educational administration, including state initiatives for reform and criticism of current preparation programs. Also proposed for deliberation are recommendations for restructuring educational administration programs in schools, colleges, and departments of education. The recommendations are divided into seven categories: program content, program structure, recruitment and selection, instructional approaches, student research, professional development programs, and university faculty. (JD)

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American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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School Leadership Preparation: A Preface for Action

by

Mark R. Shibles

for

Subcommittee on the Preparation of School Administrators

1988

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
One Dupont Circle, Suite 610
Washington, D.C. 20036-2412

(202) 293-2450

AACTE is printing this paper to promote discussion and study. AACTE expresses its appreciation to those who contributed to development of this document, and acknowledges with appreciation the time, resources, competence, and commitment contributed by the Subcommittee on the Preparation of School Administrators.

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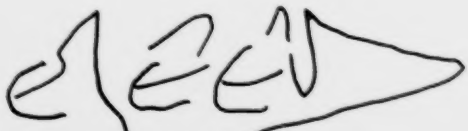
International Standard Book Number: 0-89333-052-3

PREFACE

The preparation of school leaders is of vital importance to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE): The educational reform movement in general, the recent research about school effectiveness, the development of teacher professionalism, and the potential retirement of large numbers of current school administrators signify compelling reasons for AACTE's member institutions to move swiftly to improve their educational leadership preparation programs.

AACTE presents this paper to stimulate discussion and dialogue among those who share a recognition that school leadership is in need of urgent attention. AACTE urges action at the institutional level by university faculty and deans working closely with school administrators and other partners preparing future school leaders.



Eugene B. Eubanks
President
American Association of Colleges
for Teacher Education

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION:
A PREFACE FOR ACTION

Dramatic changes are needed in programs to prepare school administrators if they are to lead their schools and faculties rather than just manage them. As teachers become more professional and assume more responsible organizational roles outside their classrooms, the status and authority of school administrators will shift. Their authority will derive more directly from their expertise in the core functions of schooling than from their hierarchical positions in the school bureaucracy. This is a necessary shift if the movement toward professionalism is to progress.

School administrators risk becoming an anachronism if their preparation programs in schools, colleges, and departments of education do not respond to calls for change in preparing them for professional ledership functions. What follows is a discussion of the status of educational administration, including state initiatives for reform and criticism of current preparation programs. Also proposed for deliberation are recommendations for restructuring educational administration programs in schools, colleges, and departments of education. The recommendations are divided into seven categories: program content, program structure, recruitment and selection, instructional approaches, student research, professional development programs, and university faculty.

School Administration: Status

During the next several years, educators and policymakers can expect to consider proposals designed to strengthen and improve leadership in

education. In some states, such proposals already have been enacted, while development continues in others. Initiatives under consideration include the following:

- Revising state selection and certification requirements to reflect the skills and knowledge needed by effective principals.

- Matching the content of state-approved educational administration programs to the training needed by effective principals.

- Developing a system to evaluate principals effectively and accurately.

- Providing inservice training to school administrators.

- Providing incentives and technical assistance to school districts to promote school site management and improvement.

- Rewarding principals and schools for performance and effectiveness. (National Governors' Association, 1986).

These and similar proposals, however, focus on strengthening the current authority structure of schools without giving enough consideration to needed organizational reforms. The development of teacher professionalism, in general, and of career ladders and other forms of staff differentiation, in particular, will bring about changes in the organizational role of teachers, which will have a direct impact on the status and authority of school administrators.

It can be argued that the model of the single leader is declining in favor of coalitions of leaders serving different purposes and performing different functions. For these coalitions to work, it is important that a number of organization members be able to perform pieces of the leadership role. Whatever form the restructuring of school leadership takes--and many forms may emerge--it will affect the way decisions are made, the way results are viewed and pursued, and the way schools are organized and managed (Schlechty, 1986). For this restructuring to occur, leadership will need to be uncoupled from its formal position, schools will need to be redesigned around models of professional practice rather than bureaucratic hierarchy, and governance and accountability structures will require redesign (Elmore, 1987). School leadership will become much more connected with managing results and less tied to the process management of educational programs.

Schools need instructional leadership, but at present the principal's time is largely consumed by management tasks. Because of this, administrators often respond rather than initiate. Principals, for example, tend to engage in service, advisory, and auditing relationships, rather than becoming directly involved in the work at the classroom level (Peterson, 1978). Pitner suggests:

> The structure of administrative work is characterized by (1) a low degree of self-initiated tasks, (2) many activities of short duration, (3) discontinuity caused by interruptions, (4) the superseding of prior plans by the needs of others in the organization, (5) face-to-face verbal contacts with one

other person, (6) variability of tasks, (7) an extensive network of individuals and groups both internal and external to the school or district, (8) a hectic and unpredictable flow of work, (9) numerous unimportant decisions and trivial agendas, (10) few attempts at written communication, (11) events occurring in or near the administrator's office, (12) interactions predominately with subordinates, and (13) a preference for problems and information that are specific (rather than general), concrete, solvable and currently pressing. (Pitner, 1982)

The result is that developmental functions too often do not occur, particularly when leadership time and resources are scarce, because maintenance functions driven by immediate needs consume the administrator.

The second wave of reform reports presents a comprehensive agenda for changing and revitalizing schools as institutions, including new sets of relationships between teachers and administrators that will provide teachers a larger role in decision making. In contrast to maintenance functions, leadership in such professional organizations will require promoting maximum involvement of individuals and groups, generating incentives for collaboration, encouraging initiative taking, and developing a professional problem-solving capacity. A blend of centralization and decentralization will be needed to both guide activity and encourage initiative, creativity, and innovation. As leadership requirements change; the preparation of leaders should reflect those changes.

Leadership Training: Criticism

At present, there is little agreement about the objectives and means of leadership preparation and not enough careful discussion about the relationships among formal training, future job requirements, and leadership effectiveness. Although it is true that leaders in all types of organizations develop many of their skills in formal learning situations, they also gain much of their knowledge and form their perspectives on-the-job rather than in university classrooms. For educational administration, this dichotomy has lead to a lack of definition and confusion about what can be learned, in which setting, and how best to learn it.

Formal leadership training is only a part of an administrator's education. Currently, most principals, for example, are trained as managers, but are not prepared to meet school instructional leadership needs (Rallis, 1986). The required courses in preparation programs for administrators commonly emphasize building management rather than instructional leadership and pay closer attention to finance, law, and general management than to understanding what constitutes good teaching or whether students are learning at their ability levels (Peterson & Finn, 1985).

Criticisms of the formal preparation of educational leaders are widespread, particularly among school administrators. A common list contains the following.

1. Entrance requirements are not competitive, and programs are easy to enter and to complete.

2. Leader recruitment programs are lacking and little effort is made to bring minorities and women into the field.

3. Courses are not rigorous. Students pursue training sporadically over time and often study fragmented, isolated courses with considerable content overlap.

4. Often courses are unrelated to what administrators do or should do on the job. Programs tend to emphasize repetitive behaviors and maintenance tasks rather than problem-solving processes and leadership tasks.

5. Graduate programs in educational administration resemble graduate programs in arts and sciences (e.g., heavy reliance on grade point averages and standardized test scores for program admission; almost universal use of time-based credits as opposed to demonstrated competencies; residency requirements; comprehensive written and oral examinations; a culminating original research project; and extensive use of lecture and discussion as the dominant mode of instruction) (Nunnery, 1982).

6. Professors often lack the ability to connect research and current developments to practice and sometimes have no administrative or school experience.

7. Programs often do not provide meaningful field experience of any type.

8. Adult learning theory is not evident in much course instruction.

9. Academic programs require potential administrators to spend considerable time alone reading, writing, and thinking about potential solutions to problems, whereas in practice administrators face situations demanding quick decisions and verbal communications to accomplish their work (Pitner, 1982).

10. Student research is often unrelated to the problems of practice.

11. Current program content has too little to do with education. Present programs place too much emphasis on administrative theory, finance, law, resource management, and other managerial functions.

12. There are too many separate and distinct educational administration courses and many times content is redundant.

Within the past two years, at least three reports have been issued recommending changes in administrator training: the report of the National

Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, Leaders for America's Schools (1987); The Governors' 1991 Report on Education, Time for Results (National Governors' Association, 1986); and the Southern Regional Education Board report, Effective School Principals (1986). These reports recognize both the importance of upgrading administration as part of the educational reform movement, and the significance of leadership in improving organizational conditions, processes, and student outcomes. In general, however, the reports tend to focus on state-level regulations, reviews of existing practices, processes to improve preparation programs, and/or statements designed to elicit support from the private sector or government. To expand on the reports' call for reform, the following recommendations are designed to provide more specific direction to schools, colleges, and departments of education that are ready to respond to the need to improve administrator preparation programs.

University Training Programs: Recommendations

The preparation of professionals differs significantly from the purposes of training. Professional preparation emphasizes thought processes and analytical experiences to enable one to apply knowledge to changing circumstances; training involves teaching individuals techniques that can be applied to like circumstances (Case, Lanier, & Miskell, 1986). Although there are a growing number of agencies, associations, organizations, and individuals active in various aspects of leadership training, universities have a unique role in professional preparation.

When considering changes to professional preparation, two central questions are, what should be learned in university-based programs, and what should be learned through other means? Compared with training mechanisms, universities seem best at transmitting basic knowledge, improving intellectual ability, and identifying general problems and conflicting ideas. Universities are less appropriate providers of other important attributes of leadership, such as developing personality characteristics and learning specific job skills. University programs can have considerable impact on the acquisition of cognitive knowledge, but less on the acquisition of skill, which requires a different set of activities and experiences.

Several assumptions underlie the following recommendations related to changing the professional preparation of educational leaders. (1) The focus of university programs should be on leadership education rather than management training. (2) Reform in education generally requires new relationships among professionals in schools and a new conceptualization of school leadership. (3) Preparation should include content experiences that enable one to analyze, develop, and test hypotheses, and to apply knowledge to both present and future circumstances. (4) Preparation is a continuum of experience that includes recruitment, induction, and professional experience. (5) Professional preparation may require significant adjustments in typical university graduate education.

Although elements of preparation programs may differ to some degree depending on the leadership role to be assumed, the following general concepts may provide a basis for considering changes that can be made in

university programs. These recommendations are proposed as a framework for discussion, dialogue, and development, not as a prescriptive model for university preparation.

1. Program Content - The knowledge to which the program exposes prospective administrators (Culbertson, 1969).

   a. The knowledge base for leadership training should emphasize types of problems in educational leadership and enable students to learn about preventive measures and diagnostic techniques for discerning problems before they arise.

   b. The present content of most courses is tied to academic disciplines (e.g., politics of education, economics of education, law) or functions of administration (e.g., resource management, general supervision, planning); there should be increased emphasis on the educational effects research and on descriptive rather than normative theory.

   c. Emphasis in content should be placed on enabling leaders to generate the tools to make ongoing improvement in their organizatons.

d. Leadership education should include much more emphasis upon the study of curriculum and instruction, learning, teaching, evaluation, assessment, philosophy, schools as institutions, issues of practice, social context, and values in decision making.

e. Course content should be problem-based and directly apply research to practice.

f. Middle-range descriptive theory about educational leadership needs to be developed. Research about other types of organizations does not always apply to educational organizations.

2. Program Structure - The organization (e.g., core, sequence, duration) of the various elements (mandatory and optional) which comprise the program.

a. Programs in educational administration should be modeled after professional programs rather than replicating a liberal arts model of graduate education.

b. Programs should have core requirements related to the professional content of school leadership, where students have an experience of more intensity and duration and reflect on actions of practitioners in school settings (Schon, 1987).

c. There should be a well-planned sequence of learning within programs. Students should move through the program not by simply amassing credits, but by demonstrating knowledge.

d. Students should have greater involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

e. Residency requirements should be altered to accommodate more intense professional preparation.

f. Classes should be offered in flexible time blocks, programs should make more provisions for informal learning, and faculty should not assume that all knowledge must be translated into formal classes.

3. Recruitment and Selection - The identification of potential candidates for the program and the basis (including previous educational and experiential requirements) on which actual enrollees are chosen.

a. The lack of sound student recruitment programs may be the most serious problem of all. Active programs to identify potential leaders should be developed cooperatively with schools, and public school systems should provide incentives to potential leaders to enter preparation programs. Universities should allocate more resources and devote more intense, directed staff efforts to recruitment.

b. Particular attention to the recruitment of minorities and women should be made through school collaborations, school incentives, scholarships and fellowships.

c. Faculty have a major role in placement; efforts should be made by faculty to ensure the hiring of minorities and women in school systems.

d. More attention should be placed upon the noncognitive aspects of leadership in recruitment and selection, including personality characteristics and assessment of specific skills related to professional practice. Distinctions should be made between those leadership behaviors that are to be sought largely through recruitment and selection and those that are to be developed primarily through learning experiences in the preparation program.

e. Practicing educational leaders should be directly involved in identifying potential school leaders.

4. Instructional Approaches - The methods, materials, and field experiences through which content is presented in the program.

a. Programs should embody adult learning theory: focus on the active role of the learner; include self-directed learning; and provide useful, job-related information. Programs should emphasize learning rather than teaching.

b. More attention should be paid to the experiences students bring to programs. Students should be expected to share knowledge from their experiences, and reflect on and analyze that experience.

c. Inductive learning processes should be infused throughout the program. There should be many reflective-thinking activities in preparation programs.

d. Opportunities should be provided for students to establish learning teams or groups within programs.

e. Clinical training strategies that are analytical in nature should be provided throughout the program. These should focus on problem solving and be conducted in field settings. Students should be evaluated for their ability in completing such assignments.

f. Internships should be required through collaborative arrangements with schools where effective practice is occurring.

g. More reality-oriented learning materials should be used in all learning experiences. These materials should stress techniques for creative problem solving.

h. Practicing educational leaders should have a greater role in performing instruction.

i. University budget allocation formulas should recognize emphasis on clinical education within preparation programs.

5. Student Research - The nature of the problems selected for study, the investigative approaches employed, and the integration with other research projects.

   a. Student research should be based upon the problems of practice, conclusion-oriented, and related directly to the core functions of schooling.

   b. Research should stress inductive approaches and make greater use of qualitative methodology.

6. Professional Development Programs - The relationship between universities and practicing administrators in schools and related agencies.

   a. Universities should establish collaborative professional development programs with schools and other educational agencies to deliver services to practicing school administrators. Likewise, schools and other educational agencies should establish professional development programs for university professors. The types of programs offered should focus on local needs and involve faculty and school professionals in problem solving.

b. More attention should be devoted to the outcomes of professional development programs by providing specific feedback about applications.

c. Incentives for participation in professional development activities should be provided to both practicing administrators and professors.

7. University Faculty - The nature of the educational administration professoriate; the university's responsibilities to the faculty; and the faculty's relationship with schools and administrators.

a. To recruit able people into the professorship in educational administration, faculty salaries should be market sensitive and correspond to the salaries of practicing educational administrators.

b. Faculty should have leadership and/or teaching experience in schools.

c. Faculty work structures should be modified to accommodate significantly greater involvement in clinical and professional development activities.

d. Increasing the number of minorities and women on educational administration faculties should be the highest priority in making new faculty appointments.

e. Faculty should be recruited to meet needs other than the traditional academic specializations within educational administration. Differentiated staffing patterns should exist within the educational administration faculty.

f. Reward systems for faculty should emphasize the application of research to practice in scholarship, teaching, and development activities.

g. Faculty should develop stronger relationships with colleagues in curriculum and instruction, with other faculties of the university, and with practicing school administrators.

Call for Action

What has been discussed here are some concepts that could lead to restructing university-based leadership education rather then the invention of a new system. Universities can do a better job than others at most aspects of leadership training by combining a meaningful mix of theory and practice. Such programs would supply inductive and reflective/analytic learning opportunities, experience in collaborative learning teams, and extensive clinical activity. It is important for universities to take this initiative. The volume of new regulations, both present and forthcoming from the educational reform movement, could well have the potential for locking leadership training into yet another series of state requirements, which sustain the current problematic structure, roles, and leadership patterns in the schools.

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